



# Representative Eileen Cody

11th Legislative District

## 2001 Session Report

### How to contact me

**Visit:**

John L. O'Brien Bldg. 337

**Write:**

P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

**Office Phone:**

(360) 786-7978

**Toll-free**

**Legislative Hotline:**

1-800-562-6000

**Hearing Impaired  
Hotline:**

1-800-635-9993

**Fax:**

(360) 786-7317

**E-mail:**

cody\_ei@leg.wa.gov

**Committees:**

Health Care, co-chair  
Appropriations

*Dear Neighbors,*

*Legislators — and the state at large — faced unique challenges this session. The Nisqually earthquake, an energy crisis and the worst drought in years, coupled with a slowing economy and two voter-approved initiatives slowed the process considerably. In spite of that, this session did have some real successes.*

*We immediately passed legislation that helped earthquake victims begin to rebuild their homes and low-income citizens to pay their energy bills. With the help of the voters, we were able to pass the best budget for public education this state has seen in decades, upping the per student spending from \$4982 to \$5437 — an increase of 9.1%.*

*While early budget proposals would have made deep cuts in health and human services, strong opposition from constituents was heard and we were able to restore most of the money for those programs. Likewise, state employees made their case and will receive the same raise — 3.7 percent — Initiative 732 granted to teachers beginning in July.*

*We were unable to pass a proposal to solve our long-term transportation needs and a way to pay for them. While Democrats in the House and Senate and even Senate Republicans agreed on the solution, House Republicans failed to support the package, leaving us in a stalemate. We badly need to fix our roads, increase highway capacity and improve our mass transit system to move people and goods more quickly and efficiently. Otherwise, our state's economy will suffer and working people will pay a heavy price in lost jobs and earning power.*

*This newsletter gives a short report on some main issues of the session. If you have questions about these or other matters, please contact me.*

*Sincerely,*

Eileen Cody  
State Representative



## Holding the line on services for people

When preliminary budget proposals were unveiled earlier this year, they carried bad news for programs that serve people. The Basic Health Plan, nursing homes, adult day care programs and other essential services for the vulnerable and elderly faced severe cutbacks.

The public was rightfully upset at the prospect of losing ground on these services and in the end, we were able to hold the line on spending for most programs and even managed to eke out small increases in a few cases. The pressure to cut these programs in future budgets is expected to be very strong. If the public believes we have a responsibility to continue to care for those less-fortunate than ourselves, you will need to keep lawmakers informed of your views.

- **Foster care** - We provided money so that foster care case managers will carry only 24 cases instead of the current 29. While this is still higher than the number of cases they ideally should have, it's an improvement that will give them more time to spend on each child's needs. We also gave foster parents small increases in payment for care and set aside \$400,000 for a program to recruit new foster families.

- **Elderly and disabled** - We held off proposals to cut adult day care in half and to eliminate dental, vision and in-home care for the elderly and disabled. We provided a 50-cent per hour raise for care workers making less than \$10 per hour. We increased the number of caseworkers caring for the developmentally disabled living in communities and preserved a program that helps special education students find work after they leave school.
- **Basic Health Plan** - We held cuts to 8,200 enrollees instead of the 35,000 that were proposed. No one will be cut from the program. As people leave the program, their slots will not be filled until the number has been reached. BHP enrollees will pay an additional \$2 co-pay for their prescription drugs.

## Higher education — ticket to a brighter future

The budget we passed invests \$31 million to increase enrollment and programs at the state's community colleges, four-year colleges and universities and technical schools, and allows these schools to increase tuition by 6.7 and 6 percent in each of the next two years. Tuition increases make it difficult for low-income families and indi-



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## Higher education continued

viduals to afford higher education, so we boosted financial aid programs, Promise Scholarships and work-study grants to keep higher education accessible.

## Paying for public schools

Voters last fall passed Initiative 728 and Initiative 732, ordering higher teacher salaries and more money dedicated to improving schools. Together, they provide roughly \$800 million over the next two years. Teachers will receive a 3.7 percent salary hike beginning July 1, 2001, and another cost-of-living raise next year. Almost \$400 million will go to local districts to improve student learning by reducing class size, after-school programs, and other efforts. We also provided new help for failing schools, anti-bullying efforts, school safety grants and other programs.



## Ticket to work

A disabled friend of mine complained to me that he – and a lot of disabled people like him – are able to work part-time, but can't because they'd lose their Medicaid coverage, which they can't do without. He argued that he wanted the dignity of working the hours he was able, and would be willing to pay for part of his Medicaid according to what he made in order to do so.

It didn't make sense to me either that we force people not to work so they can keep Medicaid coverage. I worked on this issue for the past two years, and now we have a new law, called Ticket to Work, that allows disabled people to remain eligible for Medicaid while they work, as long as they pay for their coverage according to what they earn.

## Breastfeeding babies in public

Women have been breastfeeding babies since the dawn of the human race. Unfortunately, some people don't see this as the natural act that it is and women have been subjected to harassment and indecency laws when they breastfeed their babies in public, no matter how discreetly they do it. This is another issue that I have worked to change for the last few years. Our new law states that



women may discreetly breastfeed their babies in public without fear of punishment or recrimination. The bill also encourages businesses to support breastfeeding women when they return to work.

## Improving community mental health services

The idea of providing and managing community mental health services at the local level makes sense. Local service providers know their clients and communities better than people in Olympia. When we started this Community Mental Health Services Program several years ago, we didn't anticipate that the system would develop disparities in funding and services that would leave some areas served less well than others. This year, I was able to take steps that will correct inequities that have crept into the system without taking away local control.



Gov. Locke signs the Ticket to Work bill.

## Newsletter now available in Spanish

We are working on a system to make newsletters available in Spanish. If you would like a copy of the newsletter text in Spanish, or know someone who would, please contact my office.

Estamos preparando nuestros informes en español. Si Ud. desea una copia o si conoce personas que desean leer nuestros informes en español, háganos el favor de comunicarse con nuestra oficina.



Printed on recycled paper

Rep. Eileen Cody  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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